

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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## AT HER MERCY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LOST SIR MARRINGERB," "A PERFECT TREASURE," &c. &c.

### CHAPTER I. A MEDICAL OPINION.

In the heart of England lies Dunwich, loveliest village, not of the plain, but of the hill-top. You must climb up from the rich levels where the hop-gardens lie, through half a mile of hanging wood, ere you arrive, on an August morning such as this, refreshed and cool, in that "haunt of ancient peace," and (what, alas, is more rare) of plenty. For there are no poor at Dunwich—absolutely none. Small as the place is, it contains two venerable almshouses, which absorb the Aged and Infirm, who having done their life's work, or having failed in doing it, fold their wrinkled palms, awaiting the Divine summons, and whom we call our surplus population. These dwellings have no affinity to the almshouse of the nation—the workhouse. Except that they are one-storied, they resemble colleges, each with its green court within it, like a huge emerald in a fair stone setting; the grey walls are overgrown with moss and lichen; even the ivy is cut away with no remorseless hand, for all things that are old, or have an attachment to what is old, are here held sacred. In Seymour's Home, the smaller of the two, the doors have grey stone porches, in which the inmates sit on summer eves, and knit or read, or, since the building commands the valley, look down upon the happy autumn fields, and think, or do not think (probably only doze and dream), on the days that are no more; a thoughtful spectacle enough to others at all events.

Every dwelling on the south and north of straggling Dunwich-street, commands

a lovely prospect; and the houses are happily not contiguous, so that between the gaps, the wayfarer has glimpses of both landscapes, the one, at this time, shining with the gold of harvest, and the green of the hop-crops, the other waving with woodlands as far as eye can reach. Even the windows that give upon the street have a fair outlook, and not only through these gaps aforesaid, for before every house is more or less of garden, and in almost every garden is a tree. It seems as though instead of desolating a village to make a hunting-ground, as his fellows too often did, the feudal lord of Dunwich had permitted the village to be built in his own leafy demesne, with the sole proviso that his trees should be spared.

The great gates of the modern park stand close to Seymour's Home, in the very centre of the hamlet, and are open night and day to all comers. Thus without descending from their high-placed Paradise, the happy Dunwich folks can pass from their own doors into a world of verdurous "dip" and upland, with groves of stately oak, and dells of fern, where the couched deer, accustomed to such harmless visitors, scarce lift their branching heads to watch them pass. Here and there, beneath some spreading tree, or on some hillock whence the leafy avenue prolongs itself to one green arbour, are rustic seats "for whispering lovers made," or at all events such intention is taken for granted, and they are used accordingly. In place of high blank walls, which the baser Rich too often build about their beauteous homes to bar their fellows' eyes from all fruition of them, and bolted gates with cold uncivil menials to reflect their master's harshness, the Lord of Dunwich permits all to share his woodland trea-

suress; nay, better than those "great sirs," who

Give up their parks a dozen times a year,  
To let the people breathe,

he welcomes them the whole year through. On the whole, then, with their common park, and the fair prospects from their doors, and their almshouses to retire into, if the worst came to the worst with them, we might well suppose that the inhabitants of Dunwich had little cause for complaint; yet, if so, one would be very much mistaken. With Mr. Angelo Hulet, for instance, a bachelor or widower (it was not quite understood which) of some substance, who had been settled in the village these ten years, and had, therefore, some right, he imagined, to speak with authority upon the subject, this very openness of the park was a grievance.

"I call it a deuced impertinent thing," he would argue, "of my Lord Dirleton, or of any other lord, to offer his patronage in this sort of way. It is only an underhand way of making slaves of the people. He first lays them under an obligation, and then expects to see them on their knees before him; but he will never catch Angelo Hulet in that position."

Why "Angelo," none but this independent gentleman's godfathers and godmothers (long since dead) could have explained, if even they; but, as to the "Hulet," he had a great deal of information to offer. In his little study, as he calls it, a charming apartment opening on a smooth-shaved lawn, from which three fair counties are visible, as you sit under the tall cedar in its centre (from which the house derives its name, the Cedars), there hangs a picture, whereby hangs a tale. It is the representation of a man in a vizor, with a long grey beard, who leans on a headsman's axe. He is standing on a scaffold with the block beside him, and beneath it there is a great crowd of people, chiefly soldiers; and this scaffold is, so to speak, the proprietor of the picture's "platform," whereupon he dilates to an impatient and unsympathising world upon the death of that perfidious monarch Charles the First, whose head was cut off by William, sergeant in Colonel Hewson's regiment, and founder of the race of Hulet.

It is not to be supposed, however, that the present descendant of that hero inherits in any way his truculent character. Mr. Angelo Hulet is the mildest-mannered man that ever scuttled ship of the state

in traitorous speech; a hypochondriac and a valetudinarian. His study contains a bookcase stored not with republican works, but with all the classical literature upon Indigestion; and beneath the bookcase is a cupboard, filled with every sovereign cure for the nerves, from "digestive tablets" to prussic acid. At the time of our introduction to him he is a little over sixty years of age; but presents the appearance, possibly from too free an indulgence in those excellent remedies, of a man of seventy. He is tall and spare, with a slight stoop. His face is handsome but deeply lined, and, to a disciple of Lavater, the resolute fixity of jaw contrasts itself curiously with the indecisive expression of the eyes. These are never still, and when you speak to him, instead of concentrating themselves upon your own eyes, they shift and wander as though to escape their gaze. To judge him as dishonest, and afraid to look you in the face on account of this peculiarity, would be, however, to do him a great injustice; it is only a nervous habit, which he uses with a stranger neither more nor less than with Evy, his niece, and the ruler of his comfortable little household.

Eva Carthew had lost both her parents in a single day. They were on their way from India, chiefly to see the daughter they had sent to England quite a child, and of whom they had heard such glowing accounts from time to time from the schoolmistress to whom they had confided her, as made their hearts to leap for joy, when, within two days' sail of home, their vessel foundered. Eva's father had been an officer of rank, and in the enjoyment of a good income; but with him it died, and it would have gone hard with the orphan girl, then but just fifteen, had not Uncle Angelo held out his helpful hand to her. It had never been offered to her before, nor even had she so much as seen him. Colonel Carthew and his brother-in-law had not been on good terms; indeed, they had despised one another very heartily, a state of things which had had its origin nearly two hundred years ago, for it arose out of that very "Chop at the King's Head," as Angelo irreverently termed it, or "the murder of our most gracious sovereign Charles the First," as the colonel designated that much-debated historical catastrophe. The hatchet that they could never bury was the one with which William Hulet slew his king. The subject had been always a bone of contention between

them, and, on one occasion, the colonel, being his brother-in-law's guest, had so far forgotten that circumstance in the heat of controversy, as to rise and prick with a hot poker, not his host, indeed, but that which his host valued above himself, the counterfeit presentment of his regicide ancestor. If you looked at the picture carefully, you might observe in the abdomen (for the assailant had no time to be particular) a large square patch, which had been let in to conceal the wound. Angelo Hulet never forgave that act of desecration; never spoke to his sister's husband nor his sister afterwards; and hated the innocent cause of that estrangement, Charles the First, more cordially than before. If, however, his heart had not yearned to go and see his little niece, exiled from her parents, and passing even her holidays under the roof of her schoolmistress, it had often reproached him with his neglect; "if Eleanor had only written a line to ask him to go, or if that idiot, Carthew, had had the grace to apologise for his brutal violence;" but there came no letter till that sad one from the schoolmistress which told him that his enemy was gone whither Charles Stuart and William Hulet had gone before, to Heaven's judgment, and with him the sister with whom Angelo had been playmate, companion, counsellor (in all except her marriage; he had "never liked the man"), and the only one of his own blood (save one other) in the world. Then, to do him justice, Angelo Hulet put away from him all remembrance of the quarrel about the merits of that False Tyrant or Blessed Martyr, and leaving orders that the wound in the picture should be neatly healed (he had hitherto kept it open, to keep his wrath alive and active, by constant contemplation of it), had set off forthwith for the genteel academy in Linden Grove, Battersea, where sorrowing Eva was, to lay his home and purse at her disposal.

He had found her a lithe, slender slip of a girl, with an abundance of rich brown hair, which, with her soft hazel eyes, had formed her chief charm at that time; but the promise of beauty had now ripened into full performance. At eighteen, Eva Carthew was the ornament of her uncle's home, the pride of his heart, and the acknowledged flower among the belles of Dunwich. Nor, though her beauty was of a dainty and even delicate sort, was she one of those hot-house plants of "the garden of girls," who shrink from the winds of heaven, and pass their lives wrapped up

as it were in cotton-wool. No matter for snow or rain, she rarely failed to take her daily walk, or at least to step across the street to Allen's Almshouse, and visit the ancient dames, to whom her coming was as a streak of sunshine in a waste of cold grey sky. Doctor Burne, the long-established medical authority of Dunwich, protested that she did more good in the village than all the drugs in his dispensary, and that without any "un-English mummerly;" a contemptuous expression which was understood to comprehend not only the institution, habit, and profession of Sisters of Mercy, but organised charity of all kinds; for the doctor was of the old school, and if he had had to paint an angel would have made her carry, instead of a palm branch, a bottle of port wine, and instead of a crown on her head, two half-crowns in her hand, to be given away where they seemed to be most wanted. But for Evy, it is doubtful whether the honest doctor could have kept on good terms with her Uncle Angelo, a man with whose opinions, and even with whose numerous maladies (though their existence, real or supposed, was much to his own interest), he protested "he had hardly common patience."

His patience must have been a good deal tried, for every morning it was expected that he should present himself at the Cedars, feel Mr. Hulet's pulse, and examine his tongue. When this professional interview was over, the doctor was wont to pay a complimentary visit to Evy in the drawing-room, as happened upon the particular morning we have in our mind.

"How are you, Doctor Burne? How is my uncle?"

"Excellent, my dear. I have persuaded him that he has a brand-new disease, unknown before to the human species, and he is consequently in the highest spirits."

"Oh, doctor, how can you? When you know, too, that he is really far from well."

"That is very true; but the state of his nerves is chiefly owing to his foolish apprehensions about them, and to the quarts of rubbishy stuff that he takes to cure them. Any means that succeed in making him give up those doses of prussic acid, for instance, of which he takes enough daily to poison the whole company of Dunwich Rifles, their captain included (how well that little blush becomes you, Miss Evy!) are more than justifiable. If I can only persuade him to take my medicine instead, I will answer for it it will do him no harm."

"Nor good, I suppose you mean, you wicked impostor!"

"Bread pills, my dear; honest bread pills, with a little powder over them to smell nice and nasty, are what your uncle shall have." And the doctor rubbed his fat hands together as though he were already concocting them, and chuckled till his red face grew purple.

"I am afraid he will only take all the other things as well," observed Evy, sighing.

"Perhaps; I told him, however, it would be dangerous—with all the gravity I could muster, and quoting the sentiments of a hanky-panky homeopathical book that I got hold of the other day—'It is highly unadvisable, sir,' said I, 'to continue simultaneously two courses of medicine, each of such considerable power.' And then, what do you think? I recommended him to take a brisk walk daily in the park. You know how he loves Dirleton Park." Here the jolly doctor fairly roared with laughter, and had to take out his pocket-handkerchief to dry his tears.

"Hush, hush; or my uncle will hear you. It is too bad of you to behave so to him; I don't like it, doctor."

"It's all for his good, my dear; it's all for his good," answered the old fellow, with something of serious apology in his tone, for he saw that his companion was really annoyed; "beside which, Miss Evy, I put in a word on your own account. When I said, 'You must take to walking in the park,' of course he flew into a deuce of a rage, and swore that he would see the park—well, in a state of conflagration, first, and that he wouldn't then; to which I replied that of course he would please himself, but that there was nothing so wholesome as the smell of deer. ('Ah, but that's musk deer, isn't it?' said he, gravely—when I really thought I should have had a fit.) And that I attributed your own excellent health to the frequent walks that you took in Lord Dirleton's coverts. Now wasn't that a good stroke of business for you? and yet you were just now upon the point of being angry with me; you know you were."

"I wasn't angry, doctor; but I don't like to hear dear Uncle Angelo made such fun of. He has been very good to me, you know."

Her large hazel eyes grew liquid as she spoke; not as the doctor's had done, however, but quite differently. The tears did not fall, but formed clear pools, in whose

depths you could see, or at least her companion could, glistening infinitely fairer than any Sabrina, gratitude, love, pity.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Evy," said the doctor, who, though he was overfond of banter, and had an unbecoming habit of wetting his thumb when he dealt at whist, was in feeling a gentleman, "forgive me for forgetting to whom I spoke. There is none better aware than myself that your uncle has a good heart, and that it is only his digestion which is out of order. Well, when I spoke of your health, it seems I was only just in time, for he told me that he had had it in his mind this very morning to stop your walking in the park altogether. There would have been a pretty kettle of fish! Why? Do you suppose, then, I don't know all about it—I, who am the walking repository of all the gossip of Dunwich! 'Why,' indeed? Is it possible that a being can be so young, so fair, and yet so desperately hypocritical! You positively beat your ancestor who hangs in the study yonder, my dear Miss Evy, when he dropped a tear upon his regicidal axe, and begged the king's pardon before cutting his head off. Of course I know all about it—the walks in the greenwood glade, and the talks on the seat beneath the chestnut—so that when your uncle put this question categorically, 'Are you certain that the air in the park does her any particular good?' I replied, most honestly, 'The heir of that park is essential to her.' A doctor, fortunately for you, does not write out his opinion, or else he must needs have discovered at once that I meant Captain Heyton."

"Captain Heyton is not Lord Dirleton's heir—at least, not necessarily so," observed Evy, coldly.

She had blushed and trembled at first, like a rose when the warm south wind blows, at the doctor's too significant railery; but she was calmly contemptuous of it by this time, and, after the manner of her sex, had seized upon his last words to make a diversion in the embarrassing topic.

"He is the heir presumptive, however, you little prevaricatrix," answered the other; "and presumption (especially where there is a great deal of it, as in his case) goes a great way. The idea of his standing yonder at this moment under the porch of Dame Swithin's cottage, without the excuse of a drop of rain, and staring up at the Cedars—no, no, he is not there" (for Evy's love-lit eyes had been unable to resist a furtive glance out of the window); "but the idea



of his doing so (I was about to observe) would not surprise me. There, I am a nasty disagreeable old Teaze, you are thinking, perhaps; but the fact is, my dear Miss Evy, I had a reason for my cruel conduct; I wanted to make myself quite sure, for your own sake, of how matters stood between you and the captain. I had never seen him when walking with a fair companion in the Home Wood press her willing hand, or heard him murmur like a dove—a ring-dove—that there was ‘none like her, none,’ though the presumption was that he had done it; but now that you have confessed as much—nay, pardon me, you have—I know how to proceed in your interests. Your uncle is thinking of leaving Dunwich.”

“Leaving Dunwich!” echoed Evy, with a piteous stress on the name of the beloved village where she had known nought but happiness, and which for the last three months had been Paradise itself (for the doctor’s diagnosis had been correct). “What reason can he have for doing that?”

“Well, not a very strong one, my dear, in one sense—it’s his nerves. He has heard from somebody that Balcombe—a place on the southern sea coast somewhere—is good for his complaint; I mean his old one; and that is why I found out a new one for him this morning, to which Balcombe air will be very disadvantageous—that is, if you choose it so to be. He is to have my opinion to-morrow, when I shall have thought the matter over. Of course I want you to stop here; but I would not have humbugged your uncle on my own account; my principles are too strong for that; whereas for your sake I am prepared to enter upon a career of unblushing deceit. Now am I a cruel old inquisitor? Now am I a hard-hearted wretch, eh?”

“Indeed, doctor, I know you have the kindest heart in the world——”

“Softest you mean; soft as fresh butter, with your sweet image imprinted on it. Well, go on.”

“I was going to say, doctor, that if you are quite sure that Balcombe would do dear uncle no good, I would very much rather we did not leave Dunwich.”

“Very good, my dear. Then if my medical dictum can decide the affair in Dunwich, you shall stop—— But, I say, do look out of window. It is not an idea this time, for such a thing would never have entered into my head. No other man in the parish treads so gingerly over

the stones as that. It is he himself—Lord Dirleton is coming across the street, and, if I am not mistaken, to the door of this very house; and that’s his ring.”

#### CHAPTER II. WHAT DUNWICH THOUGHT ABOUT IT.

It must not be supposed from the interview between Doctor Burne and Eva, that the latter was of a disposition underhand, or even unduly reticent. She loved her uncle well, but he was not one to invite any one’s confidence, and certainly not the tender confession of a girl’s first love. Upon his own affairs he kept an unbroken silence. Of his former life his niece knew absolutely nothing, save what, as a child, she had learnt from her mother’s lips; that he had once been married, and that his marriage had turned out “unfortunately.” As she grew up, the term had found a meaning for her that had hushed all questioning. Whatever had been the nature of his matrimonial catastrophe it had, without doubt, rendered him very hostile to the married state, and prone to jest with bitter cynicism at love and lovers. Upon the whole, then, it was not surprising that Evy had kept her affection for Captain Heyton a secret from her uncle, and, as she had vainly hoped, from all the world.

As a matter of fact there was nobody in Dunwich, except Mr. Angelo Hulet, who was not aware that there was “something between” his pretty niece and the gallant captain; though opinions were much divided upon its nature. Most people thought it was only a flirtation, and those who did not, with a few exceptions, pretended to think so. The five Miss Colvilles of the Grange, who held a highly respectable county position, and might themselves have made alliance with the noble house of Dirleton without “incongruity” (that was the term), affected to pity “that poor girl,” Miss Carthew, with whom John Heyton was “making himself so ridiculous.” Lady Wapshaw, on the other hand (widow of Sir Richard Wapshaw, late alderman of London), of Dunwich Castle, a very modern mansion, with an architectural salt-box at either wing, and an architectural watch-pocket with turrets in the centre—and who possessed one rather pretty and very marriageable daughter—protested that Evy would “deserve whatever she got,” that is, she was understood to imply, provided it was something of a disappointing nature. She had no patience with young women who threw themselves at the heads of young

men in a superior station of life to themselves, and, for her part, thanked Heaven that Captain Heyton had never met the girl under her roof. Even Mrs. Mellish, the rector's wife, with whom Eva was a great favourite, was compelled to admit, under the influence of these great authorities, that "the whole affair was to be regretted," though she positively declined to accept the position they would have forced on her of volunteer Mentor, and adviser "for her good," to the young lady in question.

"It is your bounden duty as wife of the clergyman of the parish," urged Lady Wapshaw, "to depict to this motherless girl the abyss upon which she stands."

"Without going so far as that," said Mrs. Colville, "I think a word in season from you—or, perhaps, some little convincing tract upon ambition—might be of the greatest service. Or could you not get your husband to point seriously out to her that she has set her heart upon a Dead Sea apple, with nothing inside of it."

"Oh, as to that," interposed the titled lady, contemptuously, "she would jump at it all the same. What does she care whether Captain Heyton is clever or stupid."

"I was speaking rather in a metaphorical sense," explained Mrs. Colville. "I think the unreasonableness of her pretensions should be dwelt upon—her uncle coming as he does from nobody knows where—"

"And going to a place about which there can be no possible doubt," put in Lady Wapshaw, acidly. "A man who walks out of church because he won't listen to the service about Charles the First, and kicks over the basket of oak-apples that is brought to his house on the twenty-ninth of May!"

"And of whom so little is known that it is doubtful whether he is a bachelor or a widower," continued Mrs. Colville. "Think of the gulf—the social gulf—between such a man and Lord Dirleton."

Good-natured little Mrs. Mellish looked nervously from one to the other, like a bright-eyed bird in a cage between two cats. "It's very unfortunate, certainly," she murmured, "and much to be deplored."

"Pray say it's 'injudicious,'" sneered Lady Wapshaw, "as you said of those wretches who poached in the Home Wood under his lordship's nose."

"Indeed, my lady," replied Mrs. Mellish, with some dignity, "I cannot honestly say much worse of it. Eva Carthew is a

very sweet girl, and the daughter of an officer of distinction. Of course it would be a great advancement to her—perhaps an unwise advancement——"

"You are surely not supposing a marriage, my dear Mrs. Mellish?" interrupted Lady Wapshaw.

"I am certainly not supposing anything less, my lady," returned the little woman, her bright eyes glancing scorn. "And in this house, you must give me leave to say, that I will not have anything less suggested. You don't know Evy Carthew as I know her. She is as simple as a—dear me," said Mrs. Mellish, looking about for a metaphor, for flights of eloquence were very unusual with her, "think of the very simplest of Heaven's creatures——"

"Such as the fox," muttered Lady Wapshaw, fortunately beneath her breath.

"I honestly believe," continued Mrs. Mellish, eagerly, "that if that dear girl has fallen in love with Captain Heyton (mind, I don't say she has), that she loves him for his own sake, and without a thought of his brilliant expectations."

"And I honestly believe," said Lady Wapshaw, rising from her seat, with a contemptuous smile, "that if the present Lord Dirleton, in his sixtieth autumn and his twentieth fit of the gout, was to offer Miss Eva Carthew his hand, she would drop the nephew like a hot potato, and marry my lord to-morrow. What do you say, Mrs. Colville?"

"Yes, what do you say?" echoed Mrs. Mellish. She had hopes in the squire's wife, a woman who never refused a soup-ticket or a yard of flannel to one "recommended" by the rector, and appealed to her with the doubtful confidence exhibited by some heroine of melodrama when addressing "the gentler-natured" of two ruffians. "I am sure you can never be so hard on this poor girl."

Mrs. Colville drew her shawl about her, as a judge twitches his ermine before delivering judgment, and assumed a very dignified air indeed.

"My dear Mrs. Mellish, I have nothing to say against your protégée, personally; nothing whatever; she may be, as you say, the simplest of created beings. But as a woman of the world, I must say that I think a girl in her position must be very simple indeed not to understand that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, and to accept Lord Dirleton if he asked her. For my part, I think it is just as likely that his lordship should ask her, as

that Captain Heyton will ever do so; and it is entirely on the girl's own account, and to preserve her from humiliation and disappointment, that if I were, like yourself, an intimate acquaintance of Miss Carthew's, I should think it my duty to open her eyes."

Mrs. Mellish opened her own eyes very wide indeed, dropped her little head on one side in semi-approval, and promised "to think about it;" but no further could the combined eloquence of her two visitors compel her to go.

"What do you think of it, my dear?" inquired she of her husband, before whom she laid the matter so soon as he came home from his parish round. He was the first rector of Dunwich that had ever worn a beard since Bishop Latimer's time, an innovation which had at first been desperately resisted. The Colvilles had called it "incongruous." Lady Wapshaw had even stigmatised it as "indecent;" but he had carried his point, and now wore moustache as well. It was literally impossible to move him from any position he took up on principle, a hair's-breadth.

"What do I think of it, my dear," repeated he, stroking "the manly growth that fringed his chin," as he was wont to do when engaged in deliberation; "well, I think that Mr. Carlyle's observation with respect to the population of England being 'mostly fools,' is particularly applicable to Dunwich. Where we differ is, with respect to the public advantage likely to flow from the influence of the female aristocracy. He was really a great man—a very great man—before people of fashion began to make a fuss about him."

"My dear George, how you do fly off. I want to know what to say to Mrs. Colville and Lady Wapshaw."

"Just so, my dear; it's of them I'm thinking, for I'm quite sure it never entered into your sensible mind to speak to Eva. Of course the marriage of a girl like that with Heyton is a very serious thing. Let well alone is a very wise saying, and to bring brains into a family that have got on so uncommonly well without them for three hundred years, is without doubt a risk. But you can't tell her that without wounding her feelings on the captain's account. Besides, I do think their intelligence is growing; he is not nearly such a dunderhead as his uncle."

"But I can't tell Mrs. Colville that, George," urged Mrs. Mellish, piteously.

"Can't you? I would much sooner tell

her that, than tell Eva Carthew she wasn't good enough for John Heyton. A tract on ambition, indeed! Those two women should be sent to Colney Hatch. Well, tell them that you consulted me, and that I recommended for your guidance the golden rule of life that ought to be printed in colours in every national school-room, and placed immediately beneath the Ten Commandments in every parish church—speaking of which reminds me that we have a vestry meeting at four, and that I must be off."

"But what is the golden rule?" pleaded the little woman, clinging to her husband's arm as he was about to hurry away. "I don't know what I am to tell them now."

"Now this is shocking," said the rector, kissing his wife's forehead; "this is what comes of subscribing to missionary enterprise in the Frozen Islands—yes, you did, for Lady Wapshaw showed me the half-crown in triumph; well, you may tell her from me to 'Mind Her Own Business.' Colney Hatch, indeed! that woman is positively dangerous, and ought to be sent to Broadmoor."

Thus, as has been said, opinions differed in Dunwich as to the match, if match it was to be between Miss Eva and the captain; for the little debate at the rectory was only an example of what had taken place at twenty tea-tables every evening since the unconscious pair had been seen walking together in a certain sequestered "drive" in the park. They had met more than once, indeed, at the tables of common friends, where the captain had not failed to show a marked interest in the young lady; but that had been explained (to their own satisfaction) by the five Miss Colvilles as a momentary infatuation, and by Miss Wapshaw, even still more charitably, on the ground of the captain's delicacy of feeling. He had paid attention to her because he perceived she was of inferior social position to the other guests, just as a gentleman of fine courtesy is particular to notice his host's governess. But "those clandestine meetings in the Home Wood"—as a matter of fact the pair had met but twice, only one of which occasions had been designed—were not to be explained away. Even in a rank of society where young folks are not punctilious about the proprieties, "the young man as I walks with" is a phrase of intense significance. Imagine, therefore, the excitement that reigned in Dunwich when it was reported that old

Lord Dirleton, who rarely set foot out of his own park—and, indeed, the gout seldom permitted him to set it anywhere—had been seen to call in person at the Cedars!

## A LONDON PILGRIMAGE AMONG THE BOARDING-HOUSES.

### II. "ONWARD."

In a shady sequestered square in Bloomsbury, where modern footfalls reverberate reproachfully, where large green-blinded windows once gay with brocades and beaupots now seem dipped to the lips in learning, where once cheerful fronts have stiffened into buckramed vistas of seminaries for young ladies, and where ancient rheumatic pianos are forced to tinkle, tinkle, wheezily with their poor scant breath, meekly droning Beethoven's sonatas, or writhing out Chopin's coruscations on the summer breezes, there stands a large house bedizened with a brass plate, upon which is inscribed, "Mrs. Finch's private boarding-house." A most indiscreet house for all its decorous aspect, for it is a kind of amateur whispering-gallery; words spoken confidentially appear to crawl and wriggle themselves along the broad stretches of walls, gliding under chinks and through keyholes, repeating to themselves their sense as they progress lest it should be forgotten, and at some unexpected corner shouting it out triumphantly to the extreme discomfiture of the speaker, and the surprise of persons on other floors. If you slam a door it bellows aloud, crying out its pain to other doors, announcing it to walls and ceilings, which each take up the complaint, passing it on from one to another until it makes its final exit by the skylight in an indistinct murmured rumble. In such a house nothing disreputable could live. Decorum and mummified nobility ooze from the plaster, pride of ancient lineage festoons itself along the cornice, a flamboyant reproach to all that is low and vulgar. As we move up and down its princely stairs we hold our breath, shrinking up our cubic inches into smallest limits, feeling that our frock-coat and muddy boots have no business where whilom silk stockings glistened and perfumed feathers waved. Our paper cuffs and collars may be very white, but what are those cheap substitutes for cleanliness to yellow unwashed lace, to glorious Point, or fairy-fibred Brussels? Verily, such houses are painful to live in, chafing our little inno-

cent vanity at every turn, grinding our cherished conceit out of existence.

At that blue-blooded door I meekly knocked, and presently it was opened by a tall spare woman in black silk, with a widow's cap closely framing her thin face. Her hands played nervously with a watch-chain, her eyes had a trick of looking backwards with a sudden movement like some terrified animal being run to death. "You have rooms?" I asked. "Yes," she twitted, holding the door half shut between myself and her, with an expression of face as though I were a burglar. "I wish to see them," I rejoined, pushing past her and standing on the mat. "You want to live here?" she exclaimed, as though none but ghosts could inhabit such a chill abode, and I began to think that probably most of these places are inhabited by phantoms of old days, who sit silently of an evening over spectral loo, discoursing in hollow accents about the Prince Regent, or the pump-room, and the last Bath scandal, popping up the chimney at grey dawn to rustle down again for another Sabbath as twilight deepens. "Yes, I want to live here. Your card is in the window, so you must have room." "Dear me, yes," she murmured, "I'm all in a flutter, you're so prompt. Let me think. We're very quiet people, and I'm a widow." "I have no matrimonial intentions," I premised. "No; oh no! of course not. Come in then, and we can talk," and she led me into a grim dining-room, furnished in the inevitable way with horse-hair glistening, venerable furniture, and shadowy, colourless moreen curtains. "Yes, I have room, but I don't know you, you see. Have you a reference to anybody I know?" "It is not probable, but I will refer you to my banker, Messrs. Rothschild, will that do?" "Rothschild!" she repeated, vacantly, and I found myself for about the first time before a lady who had apparently never heard that celebrated name. "I live so retired, you see," and her thin hands moved uncertainly among the cups and saucers laid out for tea, "that a stranger—but of course, if you like, you can come; yes, you can come, I suppose," and then as if seized by a happy thought, she produced a card from a reticule and said, her wan face lighting up, "here's my reference, give and take, it is a solicitor, a most gentlemanly man, and I'm sure he'll say I'm quite respectable." But I declined her card, hinting in my turn that a reference to a stranger was worth nothing, and that I needed none.



"Dear, dear! not want one. Very unusual, isn't it? Call to-morrow some time, or the next day, and then I shall have thought a little. So very sudden, you take my breath away, and a young gentleman too——" But I sat down with a resolution that appalled her, depositing my bag and wraps, and declining to move, trying on her as I did so the taming power of my eye. That stern organ was not apparently without its effect, for by degrees the trembling hands waxed calmer, and, after communing with herself awhile, she produced from the reticule a bunch of keys worthy of a Newgate warder, and led the way up-stairs. A wonderful house it was of a hundred years ago, rich in exquisitely-carved panelling, in stucco-worked ceilings of the best period, and finely-sculptured marble mantelpieces. Great rooms, lofty and well-shaped, strewn with untidy adjuncts of the present day, opened one out of another by folding-doors, with vistas of once cosy little boudoirs and quaint corkscrew private stairs. My bedroom was extremely lofty, adorned with wreaths of flutes and tambourines in relief, and a polished floor more adapted for twinkling dancers at a ball than for the sober stockinged feet of a wanderer. At the back was a garden with Inigo Jones stone seats and old trees, under the shade of which sat a number of gentlemen in black, like the council meeting of a rookery. "Those are my boarders," said Mrs. Finch, "mostly clerical gentlemen and missionaries from foreign lands. My connexion is entirely among the clergy, English and American. That is the Reverend Mr. Poke," she continued, rolling out the trisyllabic title and turning it in her mouth like some choice bonbon, "there, in the centre, looking so venerable and good, bless him. He's just returned from Zanzibar. Next him the Reverend Flick, also a missionary, a most excellent gentleman, whom you'll come to love, I am sure. And that other gentleman, dressed like an Australian digger, is an admirable man, though eccentric. But you'll meet them all at tea. Meat tea at seven; seven and sixpence a day the room. I try to make my house as like a Christian home as possible. No show or liveried servants, or earthly vanity of that kind. Two maids and I, and a reclaimed sinner of a shoe-black boy, do all the work, and give general satisfaction. It shall be my earnest endeavour to secure your comfort, sir, and if there is anything you specially fancy I

only hope you will say so. I will send one of my boys to you when tea is ready." And the timid lady glided noiselessly from the room.

"What an enormous house for two maids to keep," I thought, remarking on the excessive spotlessness of curtains and linen; "but probably missionaries straight from the undiscovered islands have learned to wait upon themselves. And what a cataleptic, desolate square, with rank grass actually sprouting between the stones in front of the hall-door!" This was caused by our end of the square being closed up with railings so that no carriages came our way unless bound for one or other of the neighbouring houses, a contingency likely to occur on an average once a year, judging from the general aspect of affairs. Two fossil ladies sunned themselves in the square opposite, near a toppling old statue, one with a book, the other occupied with some kind of worsted work. A beadle, glorious in red waistcoat and gold hat-band, paced monotonously round as though no one ever provoked him to move them on within the dreamy precincts of his authority. Many sleek cats reconnoitred from area and balcony, there was a distant wheezing of a piano, a scarce perceptible far-off hum of the outer world, and a large notice-board opposite to the effect that no children would be allowed to play, and that all street musicians would be prosecuted. Surely an ideal resting-place for over-tasked brain-workers.

A knock at the door, and a pretty little boy neatly dressed in black announced that tea was ready. Round a long table sat the gentlemen in black, at its head the twittering landlady, flanked on either side by little boys, her sons. A large urn, no tablecloth, tea, toast, muffins, sliced cold beef, and eggs; jam of several sorts, and condensed Swiss milk. The gentlemen in black devoured voraciously, with much clatter and jaw-rattling, varied by snorts and sighs of satisfaction. It struck me that this must be their first meal since leaving the South Seas. The Reverend Mr. Poke got through three eggs, a muffin, a rackful of toast, and unlimited cold meat. How he must have mulcted the savages in kind in those distant lands! The gentleman attired like a gold-digger roused my curiosity. A tall, handsome American, about forty-five years old, with full beard and sad thoughtful face, a victim to monomania. He is convinced that in two thousand years the sun will crumble away, and

that our present globe will burn to take its place; that between this and then there will be great earthquakes, culminating in a monster one, the friction of which will set the world on fire. Although he places the catastrophe so far beyond our day, he insists that people must be warned of his discovery, to which end he is always writing pamphlets, which he persecutes his friends to publish. Once possessed of a considerable income he has carried out to the letter certain precepts of the New Testament, by giving his money to whomsoever asked for it. His principles becoming known, he not unnaturally became the centre of a crew of harpies, who only abandoned him when he parted with his last dollar; but he regrets it not. Looking upon money only as a means not an end, he is perfectly content, calmly arguing that having kept others so long as he was able, it is now their turn to keep him. Nor has he suffered as yet from the result of such eccentric doctrines, having whilst travelling in Palestine fallen upon an Englishman who, perceiving him to be thoroughly sincere, and compassionating his position, actually does pay for all his frugal wants. Should his landlady need payment he tranquilly sends her to his friend, nor deems the proceeding the least unusual. Once he wrote to Horace Greeley offering a series of newspaper letters upon the destruction of the world, which were politely refused as being "ahead of the time." He is just such a calm enthusiast as might, possibly may some day, be the founder of a new religion, carrying unstable minds away by the sheer force of his convictions and spotless life.

As the meal progressed, the little boys, averaging from twelve to nine years of age, began to look weary, and to fidget on their chairs, whilst their mamma gazed ecstatically at the missionaries, trickling forth a feeble little dribble of reverence. The children, I afterwards discovered, were already launched upon the world, earning their pittance, although they looked no more than babies; one as invoice clerk at a City haberdasher's on four shillings a week, the younger ones as errand boys. No wonder they looked tired, poor little men; knocked about and banged all day at the beck and call of every one; too weary to eat, only looking wistfully at the clock, and wishing for bed. But the timid old lady here unaccountably displayed a contradictory facet of her character, being quite a martinet in her own circle, insisting on the small creatures carving for and waiting on the

boarders. Such carving as it was, too! It was pitiful to see the fragile wrists and dusky little fingers bending and battling with a great carving-knife and fork for the behoof of the insatiable gentlemen in black, who seemed images of the grave—dark, mysterious, silent, and devouring all things alike relentlessly. The cloth once removed, the youngsters were free to go to rest, whilst the missionaries sat down with the old lady to whist or cribbage and warm drinks, enlivening the performance with travellers' tales of Zanzibar and the Fiji Islands, which I quite burned and itched to dispute. Presently other boarders dropped in one by one, American professors and professoresses on their travels, and one or two young gentlemen from shops, who having simpered idiotically across the counter all day, were proportionately sulky during off hours, clamouring rudely for dinner in quite another accent from "What other article to-day, madam?" and reducing the widow into a semi-hysterical condition. And so the evening passed, a jumble of cards and hot meat, clattering of knives, rattling of plates, and edifying conversation, amazing legends of South Africa tangled with retailed remarks of customers, the last brilliant sally of the Emperor of Timbuctoo cheek-by-jowl with the latest joke from the Cave of Harmony, until, candles being produced, all trooped off up the grand echoing staircase through the resounding, rambling corridors. At cock-crow, while the gentlemen in black still snored, the little boys were off to their respective avocations, carrying each his packet of bread and jam into the great world, and I, feeling chilled by this embalmed abiding place, resolved to follow their example, and migrate Strandwards.

Quick! A hansom that shall rattle us away from the galvanised corpse of Bloomsbury into the reviving whirl, the noise and bustle of the practical nineteenth-century Strand, whose roar shall cause our half-congealed blood to start and leap and tingle in our veins. Away from suggestive glamour of the past to the commonplace and bathos of the present. Let us think no more of sacks and ruffles, but allow instead our thoughts to revel over cheap excursions to the seaside, to gloat over members of the shoe-black brigade, to glory in pictorial announcements of the Nabob pickle, to bring themselves among the matter-of-fact but delightful surroundings of to-day.

In a few moments my Jehu whisked his horse round a sharp corner, down a steep streetlet leading to the Embankment, and drew up with a jerk before a strange medley of several houses battered and jammed into one, into which I was forthwith received. A strange honeycomb of a place, where irregular landings shunt you down a couple of steps here, coax you up half a dozen more there, betray you down a winding stair leading only to a cupboard reeking of candles, and mops and brooms, then lead you up a darkened way that abuts on nothing but a blank wall, until you would fain demand a clue and vow that you will insist on a private housemaid being especially told off to you as guide through the extraordinary labyrinth. A muscular, good-humoured tomboy of a maid with dusty hair, surmounted by a muslin blister, clutched my bag out of my hand, exclaiming: "Room? Yes, one in the sky parlour; right up atop in the tiles among the cats. Missus is out, but it's all right. Who come here? Why, doctors chiefly, bachelors, stray young men, and budding soldiers training for their exam. Ladies? No! Lor bless yer, we don't want no women folk here no more nor we can help, and that's ourselves. Five bob a day this little room, and cheap at that. Drat them bells! Common room down-stairs. Breakfast at half-past nine. Smoking? Rather. Like chimbleys. Come in at any time you like before two. Missus always sits up herself to let the lodgers in, but goes to bed at two, and after that you don't come in no more. What does she do alone? Why, knits. What a heap of knitting that blessed woman do get through to be sure. There. I can't stand gossiping all day." And off she bounced, clattering down several steps at a time. My room was small certainly, but scrupulously clean. There was carpet on the floor, a real modern washhand-stand, a dimity-curtained bed, and a homely lavender-bag air about it not to be expected from the grimy, brassy mask of the outer street. At breakfast I found an array of doctors, army surgeons, and country practitioners crowded around a tiny table, with a sprinkling of raw, jaded-looking lads in all the anguish of cramming for examination, looking like wild Pauls whom much learning was driving mad. History and geography mingled, it seemed to me, with their bread and butter; an atmosphere of Lemprière surrounded them, a subtle odour of recondite classics, a

musty savour of petrified wisdom long since stewed down for high-pressure use by cunning hands. A real officer sat there just returned from India, aged about twenty-five; quite a veteran and a hero in the eyes of the sandy-haired boys. The guests were all in slippers, munching for bare life, glowering the while as only Britons can, some indulging in tea and toast, others reviving themselves with soda and B, and others again pulling themselves together with an effort by means of curaçoa and brandy, and dissipated cayenne sandwiches. During the day these gentlemen sally forth like locusts on the town, returning at various hours of the night to discuss adventures in concert over a friendly pipe and bottled Bass. Although naturally cynical, I am pleased to consider myself also gregarious, and consequently hesitated not to join the midnight smokers, observing, as one would observe the habits of silkworms in a tray, the manners of our entertaining race until the small hours swelled ominously into great ones. It was distressing that we should have been called upon to endure a whole Joe Millerful of antique medical anecdotes, diversified with a garnish of inane school remembrances and legends of Indian prowess. But there was no help for it. One by one the smokers at last retired to rest, until through tobacco billows nothing was to be discerned save the stalwart young Indian and a certain evil old shadow with a parchment-covered cranium and Hebrew nose, whom I had known well for years as a certain bill-discounting vulture, with a fledgeling of even shadier reputation than his own. While they conversed I wondered to myself as to what that ill-omened gentleman could be doing there, knowing, as I did, that his own house was in altogether another quarter of the town. What could induce him to leave his sumptuous mansion at Haverstock-hill, with its irreproachable claret and train of obsequious domestics, to vegetate in a two-pair back down by the river-side? What was the meaning of his sitting for hours of the day crooning over a violin alone in his miserable little den? Was he like me, studying mankind, or had his conscience got the better of him, and had I lit at last on the real original Wandering Jew? I had but to watch his slimy ways and the glassy veiling of his wicked cormorant eyes to be speedily enlightened. The young man opposite was a good specimen of an ordinary son of Mars. Irish, young, handsome, broad-shouldered, free

of thought and speech, garnishing his conversation with polite oaths ingeniously constructed; addle-pated, empty-headed, guileless, and open as the day, but with an overweening conviction of his own shrewdness and a religious belief in boxing as the noblest of fine arts, he offered a fair bait for the foul bird perched so deferentially beside him, ready to pounce should occasion only offer. Achilles, of the close-cropped golden hair, rattled pleasantly along, ingeniously prattling of his amours, his billiard-room triumphs, his street rows, while the Jew joined in as chorus, echoing with delighted applause his every sentiment. "Ah, sir," he said, with a deferential half-bow, "how I wish you knew my son Joseph, the very companion for you, all alone here in town. Dotes on the ring, an admirable hand at pyramids, broad of chest, and strong of arm. You must know one another. You absolutely and positively must. He's rich too," he added, spreading a confidential net; "I'm not; I'm a ruined man. He has lots of money, and knows how to spend it too. Don't give none to his poor old father, though. But ah, well, he makes it by his brains, and has every right to spend it himself. If you should ever be in want of a hundred or two—" but seeing symptoms of displeasure gathering on the other's face, he warily skated off on another tack. "He does lend money sometimes, but it breaks my heart, and makes me feel quite ill. I often say to him, Joseph, my boy, why can't you be content with a little won fairly and above board? But he's too bright and energetic to listen to poor old dad. Boys will be boys. Yet he's a fine fellow with it all, and I know you'll like him. We all have our little faults, you know. Why, the muscles on his arm—" "By dash, dash, look at mine!" interrupted young Achilles, fairly off on his hobby, rolling up his sleeve to the shoulder; "a sculptor told me once" (this in a low, awe-stricken voice) "he'd like to model it. Feel it now. Hard, isn't it? Do you know I knocked a fellow's dashed teeth down his throat the other day who trod accidentally on my toe. See the marks on my knuckles now. Dash, dash! Though he said he was sorry I tell you I mauled him well, sending him to bed for a week. My shirt-sleeves were covered with his blood." And the young innocent smiled good-naturedly, his excellent heart dimpling out into sunlight all over his healthy face as though he really had done something clever. And why not, poor fellow, con-

sidering his bringing up? He informed us that his father taught him the noble art of self-defence while yet toddling with unsteady feet; that this worthy sire amused himself with sham fights, bestowing pennies on his baby adversary whensoever that infant succeeded in punching the paternal proboscis; that one day when the pennies had become half-crowns, and the young knuckles were swelling hard and large, he knocked his father down, drawing much claret at the same time, whereupon that gentleman sat ruefully on the floor awhile, half angry and half pleased, until at length the gallant creature conquered his feelings, shook himself with a grunt, drew a sovereign from his pocket, and bestowed it, with his blessing, on young scapegrace. What marvel that a boy so educated should learn to look on Jemmy Shaw's as an Elysium, on beer at the Hampstead Chicken's as nectar worthy of gods; that he should daily frequent doubtful billiard-rooms, should dally over Haymarket bars, and brawl with waiters at night houses? Such wasted careers are more often the result of wrong impulse at starting than of natural perversion of character. It is interesting to remark how such young men, being of sterling worth at bottom, talk with bated breath and wide-open reverent eyes of science and art, instead of reviling them in their ignorance as real swine would do, as though they instinctively recognised awful intangible deities whose shoes' latchet they knew themselves unworthy to approach. Well, well, as some cynic once observed, such sparks would, on the battle-field, make as pretty corpses as better men. But is it not a dreadful thing that tempters should be enabled to dog their inexperience even under their roof-tree; that not satisfied with importunities by post, evil beasts of prey should purr at their breakfast-tables, ready at slightest encouragement to guide them to their ruin; to pop down à propos notes of hand upon their plates, and smilingly present a pen, mumbling out benevolently the while sixty per cent at least? Dwellers in boarding-houses must of course take their company as they find it, but it does nevertheless seem hard that the lamb should be expected to lie down with the wolf, the fly to couch with the spider, and yet to come away with an unpunctured skin. Do we not feel terribly old, you and I, as we sit watching this youth struggling in the toils so deftly wound about him, listening to his artless cunning, pitifully surveying his knowing



winks as he babbles merrily, with his musical straightforward voice, of the downy manner in which he bilked the billiard-marker for fun, and paid him double afterwards as a salve for wounded amour propre, knowing as you and I do the while that the real downy one is seated with itching talons at his elbow, ejaculating complimentary remarks, and filming over with impenetrable veil of falsehood the glittering eyes in which he might haply otherwise discern the dangerous truth, and flee from it.

#### BY THE FIRE.

DEAD eyes are gazing on her from the pictures on the wall,  
Dead voices in the wailing winds that sweep the up-land's call,  
Dead feet seem pattering round her as the raindrops lash the pane,  
Till she stretches hands of greeting, dumb hands that yearn in vain.  
Like one in fairy legend, like one in dreamland lost,  
At every turn by dead men's steps her onward way is crossed,  
The very flowers whisper, of who plucked them long ago,  
The very birds have echoes in their trillings soft and low.  
The chords she touches breathe for her the music of the past,  
On every page the shadow of old memories is cast,  
The "brooding sense of something" gone falls solemn all around,  
Making the common paths of life her hushed heart's holy ground.  
On the table-ground of middle life the dull and dreary band,  
Where shadowless as sunless lies the stretch of beaten sand,  
She stands alone and listens, all behind her veiled in mist,  
In front dim hills beyond the vale, their summits promise kissed.  
Sob on, oh wind, sigh on, oh rain, sweet faces form and die,  
There, where amid the caverned coals the fairy fancies lie,  
For in sleeping as in waking, till she crosses the dark stream,  
The sunshine of her lonely heart from the peopled past must gleam.

#### OUR FORMER WARS WITH THE ASHANTEES.

##### THE FIRST WAR.

WE have just plunged into a dangerous war with a brave and powerful African people, who have twice before defeated us. In fighting against the Ashantees, it must be remembered, we have to fight against climate as well as man, and fever is a terrible enemy to encounter; we shall, moreover, have to battle against great odds, and in a country comparatively unknown. It is well, therefore, to arm ourselves with as

much knowledge as possible of the antecedents of these savages, and not to forget our past disasters on the Gold Coast. It is always better to overrate than to despise an enemy. The Ashantees on Salisbury Plain would, no doubt, soon succumb to our shells and bullets; but on their own mountains, and near their rivers and forests, aided by fevers and local diseases of all kinds, by climate, reptiles, and almost impassable woods, they will prove, we fear, very formidable adversaries indeed, and require all our generals' foresight and intrepidity to overcome them.

It was in 1806 that the English first came into personal relationship with the warlike and aggressive people of Ashantee. To understand the causes of this collision between black and white we must plunge into Ashantee politics. At the time of the war the Assin country, which lies at the back of the Fantee land, and borders the Ashantee territory, was divided into two states. Over one part reigned King Amoo, over the other King Cheboo and King Quacoe Apontay, both vassals of the King of Ashantee. Now it so happened that a rich man died in Amoo's town, and according to custom was buried in state, with his golden ornaments, according to the custom of his people. One of Cheboo's people being present at the ceremony, yielding to a lust for the gold, at night robbed the grave and decamped with the treasure. King Amoo laid the case before his suzerain, the King of Ashantee, who decided in his favour, and detained Quacoe Apontay as ransom. When set at liberty, the faithless Quacoe, however, refused to accede to his suzerain's award. Upon this King Amoo attacked his town and routed his army. The matter was then again brought before the King of Ashantee, and a palaver appointed, but Quacoe, the incorrigible, now brought an armed force secretly, and a pitched battle was the consequence, which led to the death of the rascal who opened the grave and stole the gold from the dead, and to the total defeat of Quacoe the unjust. At this crisis, Ashantee again stepped in and sent two gold ornaments (manillas), one to Amoo, and the other to Quacoe, directing them to cease hostilities. Both men took the manillas and affected to obey. Amoo laid down his arms, but Quacoe, robber to the core, again attacked Amoo, and drove him from his capital. Amoo, justly indignant at this repeated treachery, soon obtained succour and overthrew his antagonist. The King of Ashantee, still disposed for peace, presented

Amoo with two gold swords and a gold axe, as proofs of his confidence, and recommended him to conciliate Quacoe Apontay and terminate the feud. In spite of this the incorrigible Quacoe presently attacked and totally defeated Amoo's army, and, worst of all, carried off the Ashantee golden swords and hatchet; further, he killed every one he met in Amoo's country, even the messengers from the monarch of Ashantee himself, who at last proclaimed war upon him.

Quacoe and Cheboo, dreading their monarch's vengeance, now fled into the Fantee country, thereby dragging a fresh people into misery. The king, seeing this, sent a present of twenty ounces of gold to the caboceer, or mayor of Assecoomah, professing peace to the Fantees, but a wish to pursue and punish the wicked Cheboo and the infamous Quacoe. The foolish Fantees, however, would take neither side, and refused to deliver up the fugitives. Upon this Ashantee broke into a not unnatural fury with a nation that harboured its rebellious vassals, and Appia Dunqua, the Ashantee general, flew at the enemy, and in a great two days' battle at Buinka, in Fantee, defeated the two kings and their new allies. Quacoe, thus baffled on all points, now offered submission to Ashantee on the singular proviso that all his debts should be paid on his return home. The king, graciously relenting (and indeed the Ashantees appear to advantage in these early wars), sent presents of peace to Cheboo and Quacoe, who, however, bad to the last, beheaded the messengers. This wicked and ungrateful act naturally roused the king to renewed madness, and he now vowed eternal war on the perfidious ingrates. Acoom, the caboceer of Assecoomah, who had already treacherously released some of the king's Fantee prisoners, was applied to for provisions. Six times he sent them with business-like readiness, but the seventh he seized the six hundred Ashantee porters sent for the food, and sold them for slaves. Upon this the king declared war against him also, and, after defeating him, went in search of that bad couple, Cheboo and Quacoe. The Fantees, Braffoes, and Annamaboes opposed the king's march, but were repeatedly defeated.

It was now that this war touched upon our frontiers, and we first came into collision with the troublesome people against whom we have just now, for the third time, declared hostilities. The governor of Cape Coast Castle, being under apprehen-

sion for the safety of the British settlements, was inclined to send a flag of truce to the King of Ashantee, who was now (May the 6th, 1806) at Abrah, only fifteen or twenty miles from the sea; but the Annamaboes, objecting, refused to allow the governor's messengers to proceed to Ashantee. They were, in fact, placing too much reliance on their own name and strength, fully expecting to be able to capture or destroy the King of Ashantee and his whole army. But the whale unfortunately is not to be easily caught in a simple fishing-net.

The Ashantee army soon after arrived at Cormantine, and, defeating the inhabitants, destroyed the town. The Ashantee captain, pillaging the Dutch fort, took up his residence there in full dignity. Governor White, the English governor of Annamaboe fort, now felt the time for negotiation was come, and at once sent a flag of truce to the Ashantee general to ask the king's motives for marching to the coast, and proposing himself as a mediator in the dispute.

In the mean time the Ashantee general, elated at obtaining a footing on the coast, the long ambition of his people, on arriving at Cormantine, had dipped his sword three times in the sea, and sent to his king calabashes of sea water as a proof of his victories. The Ashantees were in no mood now for negotiation; they bore to Governor White a haughty message that when the English governor had sent him twenty barrels of powder and a hundred muskets, he would be told what the king's designs were. The governor, like a true Englishman, unwilling to show alarm, feasted the messengers, but told them politely that he regretted the king, their master, did not appear inclined to conciliation, yet that if he told him in what manner the Annamaboes had offended he would endeavour to obtain satisfaction for the injury, but that till he knew how they had transgressed he should grant them the protection of the fort if they sought it; and, finally, he said that if the king's army approached the fort with hostile intentions, it would be fired upon. On dismissing the ambassadors, the governor, hearing they would certainly be murdered by the Annamaboes on their return with the flag, sent them to their own quarters guarded by an escort. Before leaving the fort the Ashantee heralds were (as a precaution) taken to see some heavy guns, loaded with shot, to give them some idea of the destruction artillery could cause.

Annamaboe was now put on the defensive, and the courage of the Annamaboos rapidly oozing away, the townspeople claimed the English governor's protection. Mr. White assured them of assistance, but at the same time urged them to vigorous exertions for their own defence. Strong parties were then placed on the look out, every avenue leading to the town was guarded, and on the first alarm the old men, women, and children were to be sent inside the fort, while those that could not be accommodated were to keep close to the walls, and under the shelter of the guns.

At this time it is a shameful fact that Governor White, after twenty-seven years in Africa, had been so intent either on commerce or idleness, that he had never taken the trouble to ascertain the Ashantee character. He did not even know they were brave and daring, but supposed they were like the small tribes near him, who would not face musketry, much less cannon; and when bullets began to whistle near, would creep into sand holes. After a lull of a week the Ashantee general, who proved to be the King of Dinkara, suddenly moved forward and took possession of Agah, a village situated on a point of land eastward of Annamaboe, and an important point for observing the town. The Annamaboos, irritated at this, marched out on the 14th of June to recover the place. A battle ensued. The Ashantees fired with some regularity and aimed well, while the Fantees blazed about wildly. The Ashantees retreated in good order, retaining, however, part of the village which lay in a valley where the Annamaboos did not seem to care to venture. During this fight the king, with the main body of the army, was craftily busy, three miles off, securing all the passes leading to Annamaboe.

Early on the 15th the town was attacked, and every Annamaboe who could carry a musket went out to meet the enemy. The firing soon began to be very hot and heavy, and smoke arose from various parts of the surrounding country. Alarm and confusion, the sure precursors of defeat, prevailed in the town, and the old men, women, and children crowded into the fort till it was full, and the gates were bolted. As the sound of musketry was advancing fast, and the Fantees were already retreating in great disorder, the governor fired one or two big guns over the town to alarm the assailants; but they were too resolute and elated by victory to care for mere noise, and about eleven o'clock bullets began to whistle in every part of the fort, and the Ashantees

poured into the town in all directions, pursuing the Fantees even to the beach, where the slaughter was incessant, terrible, and indiscriminate.

The Annamaboos had relied on their canoes and their skill in swimming for escape, but they were pursued too closely by their relentless enemies. During this carnage the governor was very active with his small garrison in trying to repel the black swarms of assailants. A twenty-four-pounder, that pointed westward along the beach, swept down hundreds of Ashantees with grape-shot, while a three-pounder which flanked the gate eastward, poured grape into the flocks of blacks, who, however, trampled on over the dead, and came under the very walls to carry off the women who stood there in frightened heaps. At this juncture the English governor was shot in the mouth and left arm, an officer and two men were wounded, and one man killed. Our garrison consisted of only twenty-nine men, including the governor, four officers, and four free mulattoes; the rest being soldiers, workmen, or servants. The whole force of the Ashantees were now directed against the fort, where they expected to find great booty. But the walls were high and well flanked, the gates sound and well barricaded. There was still hope for resolute men even against these howling black myriads, drunk with human blood, that beleaguered them. The senior officer who had taken the place of the wounded governor, was cool and prudent. Finding the gunners at one part frequently being shot at the embrasures, he resolved to rely entirely on his musketry. About noon the garrison was reduced to only eight men, including the officers, and the Ashantees were using every effort to force the west gate, even after two previous repulses. The third time they brought fire, but the man who carried it fell dead upon the brands, and so extinguished the flame. The attack and defence continued till six o'clock, when darkness came and stopped the fighting. The last twilight was spent by the brave garrison in repairing injuries and preparing for possible night attacks.

The day dawned on a horrible scene of blood and devastation. Eight thousand Fantees had perished by the fire, the sea, and the sword. Heaps of dead and wounded lay round the walls, and for a mile along the surf-beaten eastern shore, the houses were all unroofed or in flames. The old men in the fort hung their heads, the women wept and screamed, the children

cried piteously. About two thousand Annamaboes had taken refuge in the fort, while about two hundred had escaped to a rock, a pistol-shot from the beach, and surrounded by the sea.

Although the Fantees had been attacked by three times their number, their resistance had been as feeble as their previous self-confidence had been extreme. The attacks on the fort were soon resumed, the warlike Ashantees advancing with bold shouts coolly and resolutely up to the very muzzles of our guns. At the east side of the fort two well-served three-pounders destroyed numbers with grape-shot, but the cannon which flanked the gate at the west side could not be fired, from the gunners being exposed to the excellent marksmen of the Ashantees. Two of our officers stationed at this post expended nearly three hundred rounds of ball-cartridge in keeping this gate clear, firing till the pain of the recoil prevented them using their muskets. The enemy suffered severely, twenty or thirty often falling at a single discharge of grape, and our muskets often killing and wounding at the same time, so crowded were the besiegers.

The garrison was now in an alarming position, blockaded on the land side, and with an imperfect communication with the sea, only a few weeks' provision in store for two thousand and eight people, and the dead bodies fast putrefying. The few defenders were terribly fatigued. Luckily for them, the Ashantees also had had nearly enough. Neither party, however, wished to be the first to offer terms. Fortunately, about four P.M. on the 16th two vessels arrived with succour from Cape Coast Castle. By the governor's orders, a white flag and union-jack were then lowered over the wall as a sign of truce. The rejoicing among the Ashantees was great at seeing this welcome emblem; crowds collected round it, and it was with difficulty the King of Ashantee's officers (known by their golden swords and axes) could clear a way to his quarters through the shouting multitude.

The enemy paid all respect to the flag of truce, although some of them began to try and get at the rock where the trembling Fantees were; but a musket-shot or two soon brought them back. The flag of truce returned from the king about seven P.M. The king was pleased at its being sent, and gave the soldiers who carried it a fat sheep. The king was urged to go to Cape Coast Castle to meet Governor Torrane, but eventually the governor agreed

to come to Annamaboe and see the king. This interesting interview, which gives us an authentic view of Ashantee ceremonies, has been well described by Mr. Meredith in his Account of the Gold Coast, who was present.

"The governor was obliged to visit each man of rank before he could be received by the king, a ceremony that could not be prudently denied, and which occupied some time, for these men had their several courts, and collectively had formed an extensive circle. Every one of them was seated under a big umbrella, surrounded by attendants and guards, with young persons employed in fanning the air, and dispersing the flies, which were numerous and troublesome. One of these men and his attendants excited some curiosity and attention. His dress and appearance were so different from those of the others that it evidently proved he must have come from countries situated a considerable distance inland. He was a tall, athletic, and rather corpulent man, of a complexion resembling an Arab or an Egyptian. His dress was heavy, and by no means adapted to the climate. He wore a cap that came down below his ears, and, being made of yellow cloth, it did not contribute to diminish his tawny complexion. He was a follower of the Mahomedan religion, possessed much gravity, but was communicative, condescending, and agreeable. He had about him a great number of sentences from the Alkoran, which were carefully encased in gold and silver, and upon which he set a high value. He was a native of Kassina, a country which appears to be situated to the south of east from Tombuctou. He said he had been at Tunis and at Mecca, had seen many white men and ships, and described the method of travelling over the great desert. This person commanded a body of men who fought with arrows, as well as muskets; four of the arrows were found in the fort; they were short, and pointed with barbed iron. He had many persons in his train who were of the same colour, but varied a little as to dress; they were all habited in the Turkish manner, but did not wear turbans. After the ceremony of visiting these persons was over, the governor was conducted towards the king, who was surrounded by a number of attendants, whose appearance bore evident signs of riches and authority. Chains, stools, axes, swords, flutes, message-canes, &c., were either of solid gold, or richly adorned with that metal; these dazzling appearances, added



to damask, taffety, and other rich dresses, gave a splendour to the scene highly interesting. When the governor approached the king, and when an interchange of compliments had passed, the air resounded with the noise of musical instruments, such as drums, horns, and flutes. After some conversation, during which much politeness was observed in the behaviour of the king, the governor wished this ceremonial visit to be returned, which was agreed to, and a convenient place was found to receive the king and his train. The governor, his officers, and attendants were formed in a half-circle, and seated under the shade of some trees, and a passage of sufficient breadth was formed by the soldiers for the king and his attendants to pass through. It was full two hours before his majesty was announced, so numerous was his train. Each man of rank, as he advanced, paid the necessary compliments agreeably to the custom of his country, and then filed off. It was previously directed that the king should be received with arms presented and the Grenadiers' March, when passing the soldiers. This mark of distinction and respect appeared to give him much satisfaction; he halted to observe the orderly behaviour and uniform appearance of the soldiers, and the martial air that was playing seemed to produce the most agreeable sensations on his mind. The writer had an opportunity of seeing this man. He was of the middle size, well formed, and perfectly black, with regular features, and an open and pleasing countenance. His manner indicated understanding, and was adorned with gracefulness; and in all respects he exceeded the expectations of every person. His dress was plain; it consisted of a piece of silk wrapped loosely about him; a wreath of green silk ornamented his head; his sandals were neatly made, and curiously studded with gold. He was not distinguished by any gold ornaments, as his attendants were. One man, who was dressed in a grotesque manner, and who appeared to act the buffoon, was literally loaded with gold."

The king confessed that he had lost three thousand men at Annamaboe by our fire and by disease. He inquired politely after Governor White's wound. Peace was then proclaimed. No person residing at our British forts (provided he preserved neutrality) was to be molested, and respect was to be paid to the British flag. The king at first claimed possession of all the fugitives in the fort, but eventually he waived this demand.

The war with the Fantees was, however, sternly pressed forward, for King Acoom was marching towards Annamaboe to give the Ashantees battle. They met and fought on July the 4th. Acoom was defeated with his men, and would have perished had he not had a river at his rear, the fords of which were known to the Fantees and not to the Ashantees. After this the Fantees carried on a predatory warfare, cutting off small foraging parties. The Ashantees laid almost every town and village they came to in ruins, but disease had before been among them in Annamaboe, and they now lost such vast numbers, that the king at last left a force at Accra to collect prisoners, and returned reluctantly to his own country.

Cheboo and the infamous Quacoe, who brought ruin wherever they came, now fled with five hundred followers to Cape Coast, where the natives were too disposed to give them protection. On hearing of the attack on the Annamaboe fort, the governor had resolved to secure these men, and by that means, if possible, end the destructive and cruel war, and win the king's friendship. The attempt partly failed, for the slippery Quacoe escaped, leaving behind him, however, his regalia, but Cheboo (after several men had been killed on both sides) was captured and sent to Ashantee. This conciliated the king, and gave him a good opinion of the British, and, as it afterwards appeared, prevented a plot being carried out which had been already planned. The king, eager for revenge for the frightful loss his army had sustained, had selected six thousand men, half of whom, at a given signal, were to mount the walls of our fort, while the other half set fire to powder at the foot of the ramparts. These explosions it was calculated would shake the fort and create confusion among the garrison, who would be galled besides by an unceasing musketry fire.

The Ashantees invaded Fantee again in 1811, and a third time in 1816. These invasions reduced the Fantees to beggary. Not many were killed in battle, for the cowed and frightened people seldom fought, but the butcheries in cold blood were ruthless and incessant, and gangs of thousands of slaves were dragged into the interior to be sacrificed at the Ashantee's great annual yam feasts in the early part of September, when the yam harvest begins. Famine and pestilence followed in the footsteps of the savage conquerors till the wretched remnant of the poor Fantees gave themselves up to despair, and deemed themselves rejected and abandoned by their fetish gods. Nor

had our African Company gained much generosity or courage by experience. Their only aim seems to have been to secure trading stations. The honour of England was to them of less value than a cask of rum or a calabash full of gold dust. The only weapon they wielded was conciliation—conciliation at any price, peace, however grovelling. The government had already given gold to buy off the Ashantees. They now determined to send an embassy to conciliate so great a monarch, and to plead for an extension of commerce.

In 1817, the African Committee sent out a store-ship with presents for the King of Ashantee, and desired the governor of Cape Coast to send an exploratory mission consisting of three gentlemen. They were to try and induce the king to cut a path not less than six feet wide from his capital to the coast. They were also, if possible, to take hostages. Wise company to think the king such a fool as to cut a road for the passage of our troops, and to give hostages to a handful of men whom his army had recently blockaded!

The interview of the mission with the King of Ashantee has been very admirably described by Mr. Bowditch, a pushing young "writer," who seemed to have imposed on himself the duty of spokesman on the occasion. "The prolonged flourishes of the horns, a deafening tumult of drums," says Bowditch, "announced that we were approaching the king. We were already passing the principal officers of the household; the chamberlain, the gold horn-blower, the captain of the messengers, the captain for royal executions, the captain of the market, the keeper of the royal burial-ground, and the master of the bands, sat surrounded by a retinue and splendour which became the dignity and importance of their offices. The cook had a number of small services covered with leopard's skin held before him, and a large quantity of massive silver plate was displayed before him, punch-bowls, waiters, coffee-pots, tankards, and a very large vessel with heavy handles and clawed feet, which seemed to have been made to hold incense. I observed a Portuguese inscription on one piece, and they seemed generally of that manufacture. The executioner, a man of an immense size, wore a massive gold hatchet on his breast; and the execution stool was held before him, clotted with blood, and partly covered with a caul of fat. The king's four linguists were encircled by a splendour inferior to none, and their peculiar insignia, gold canes,

were elevated in all directions, tied in bundles like fascies. The keeper of the treasury added to his own magnificence by the ostentatious display of his service; the blow-pan, boxes, scales, and weights were of solid gold. A delay of some minutes, while we severally approached to receive the king's hand, afforded us a thorough view of him; his deportment first excited my attention; his manners were majestic yet courteous; and he did not allow his surprise to beguile him a moment of the composure of the monarch. He appeared to be about thirty-eight years of age, inclined to corpulence, and of a benevolent countenance. He wore a fillet of aggrs beads round his temples, a necklace of gold cockspur shells strung by their largest ends, and over his right shoulder a red silk cord suspending three sapphires cased in gold; his bracelets were the richest mixture of beads and gold, and his fingers covered with rings. His cloth was of a dark green silk; a pointed diadem was elegantly painted in white on his forehead; also a pattern resembling an epaulette on each shoulder, and an ornament like a full-blown rose, one leaf rising above another until it covered his whole breast. His knee-bands were of aggrs beads, and his ankle-strings of gold ornaments of the most delicate workmanship; small drums, sankos, stools, swords, guns, and birds clustered together; his sandals, of a soft white leather, were embossed across the instep band with small gold and silver cases of sapphires. He was seated in a low chair, richly ornamented with gold; he wore a pair of gold castanets on his finger and thumb, which he clapped to enforce silence. The belts of the guards behind his chair were cased in gold, and covered with small jawbones of the same metal; the elephants' tails, waving like a small cloud before him, were spangled with gold, and large plumes of feathers were flourished amid them. His eunuch presided over these attendants, wearing only one massive piece of gold about his neck; the royal stool, entirely cased in gold, was displayed under a splendid umbrella, with drums, sankos, horns, and various musical instruments, cased in gold, about the thickness of cartridge paper; large circles of gold hung by scarlet cloth from the swords of state, the sheaths as well as the handles of which were also cased; hatchets of the same were intermixed with them; while the breasts of the ocerahs and various attendants were adorned with large stars, stools, crescents, and gossamer wings of solid gold."

There was evidently no lack of "loot" in Ashantee in those days, whatever may be the case now.

### LADIES' FEET IN CHINA.

In his interesting and instructive work on the Chinese, Sir John F. Davis remarks that "in no instances have the folly and childishness of a large portion of mankind been more strikingly displayed than in those various and occasionally very opposite modes in which they have departed from the standard of nature, and sought distinction even in deformity. Thus while one race of people crushes the feet of its children, another flattens their heads between two boards; and while we in Europe admire the natural whiteness of the teeth, the Malays file off the enamel, and dye them black, for the all-sufficient reason that dogs' teeth are white!" In the present paper we desire to say a few words on the first of these national peculiarities, and to describe briefly the *modus operandi*, the effect of the practice on the women of China, and, as far as may be, the origin of this fashion, which condemns so many millions of our fellow-creatures to permanent disfigurement.

Some writers have ascribed the introduction of this extraordinary custom to the Manchu Tartars, but this is a very great mistake, as will be seen when we come to give some of the prevailing native accounts of its origin. It undoubtedly existed long before their advent, and, moreover, their women do not distort their feet at all, and wear the same shaped shoes as the men do, the only distinction being that the sole is much thicker. Further, there is a saying that death is the penalty for any small-footed female who is found within the precincts of the imperial palace at Peking; and this is certainly a tolerably strong proof of the aversion of the Manchus to the practice. It is not at all improbable that this cramping of the women's feet may, in some measure, be due to the same feeling which often makes a Chinaman let his finger-nails grow to a hideous length, his notion being that he thereby shows the world that he is not obliged to earn his living by manual labour; and, indeed, a small-footed woman cannot, by any possibility, do very much hard work, though some of them do contrive to labour in the fields, &c. It must not be imagined that all Chinese women necessarily have small feet, for large numbers of the poorer classes, who are

likely to have to earn their livelihood by heavy work, are brought up with their feet uncramped, and of the natural size, though (as we are told in the *Social Life of the Chinese*) "many poor families prefer to struggle on for a precarious living, bringing up their daughters with small feet rather than allow them to grow as large as they would grow, and oblige them to carry burdens and do heavy work, in order to obtain a more competent support, small feet being an index, not of wealth, but of gentility. Parents whose daughters have small feet are enabled to marry them into more respectable families than if their feet were of the natural size."

The operations necessary for distorting the feet generally commence between the ages of six and nine, and the later it is deferred, the greater is the pain inflicted on the girl. Long strips of native calico are bound round the foot, going from the heel over the instep and toes; they are then passed under the foot and round the heel, and are fixed very firmly. The operation causes much pain, and takes a long time (usually two or three years) before it is perfected, for the only agent employed is the long bandage of cloth; the feet remain extremely tender and useless for all practical purposes till the bones, &c., have become set in the new shape into which they are forced. It is said that after the lapse of a few years, if the operation has been skilful, there is no pain, and the foot becomes, in a manner, deadened, the effect of the bandaging being to check the circulation of the blood, and to prevent the further growth and development of the foot. A medical observer tells us\* that "there is a class of women whose vocation it is to bandage the feet of children, and who do their work very neatly; and, from what I have seen, the Chinese women, who in childhood have undergone skilful treatment, do not suffer much pain, beyond the weakness of the foot, from the destruction of the symmetrical arch, and the inconvenience of being unable to walk when the foot is unbound and unsupported. If the feet have been carelessly bound in infancy, the ankle of the woman is generally tender, and much walking will cause the foot to swell and be very painful."

Without going too deeply into surgical minutiae, the following seems to be the consequence of the compression of the foot: the instep is bent on itself, the heel-bone is thrown out of its horizontal position,

\* Lockhart's Twenty Years' Experience in China.

and what ought to be the posterior surface is brought to the ground. The ankle is thus forced upwards, and the great toe is the only one that remains, the four smaller ones becoming, in course of time, mere useless pieces of skin. The foot, too, becomes narrow, and tapers off to the end of the great toe; it is placed in a short narrow shoe, which is pointed at the toe, and very commonly the heel is elevated by means of a block of wood, the consequence being that the woman seems to be standing, as it were, on tip-toe, or, to be more precise, on the tip of her great toe. The following paragraph will give a fair notion of the effect produced by the force of fashion on the Chinawoman's foot under varying conditions: When the process is begun at the proper age, and the bandaging is properly attended to, the heel sometimes comes down to the ground, or rather to the level of the end of the large toe. The heel seems to elongate under the process of bandaging; but, when the foot is large and almost full-grown before the compression of it begins, the heel often cannot be brought down to a level with the end of the toe. Under these circumstances, a block of wood is put in the shoe under the heel. So that the bottom of the block and the end of the toe are nearly on the same level when the individual is standing. We would here add that the fashionable shoe which the Chinese lady wears is not much more than three inches long, and that strips of cloth are wound round part of the foot and the lower leg.

Nature has given Chinese women very small hands and feet, but according to our English ideas the latter are robbed of all their symmetry and beauty by the disfiguring process which we have described. To us it was always quite a piteous sight to see the women in China hobbling along with tottering gait—for they do not exactly limp as some put it—and with their arms extended, seemingly to balance themselves, one hand often grasping the long bamboo stem of a pipe, which, when viewed from a distance, an uninitiated observer not unnaturally concludes must be a walking-stick. The Chinese, however, apparently admire the helpless gait of the women, for they compare them, when hobbling along, to "the waving of willows agitated by the breeze." We think it a mistake to assert, as some do dogmatically, that Chinese women cannot walk far, for they undoubtedly can hobble along for very considerable distances, and do not, as a rule, seem much distressed; they take their time about it, it is true, and

do not get over the ground very fast. The misery that is supposed to arise from the practice has been absurdly exaggerated, and, judging from the observations of those well qualified to form an opinion, we are inclined to think that when disease of any kind follows upon the operation, it is mostly due either to unskilful manipulation or some constitutional infirmity. It may be interesting to mention here that actors on the stage, when playing the part of women (for there are no actresses in China), have their feet bandaged to make the spectators believe that they are in the fashion.

The origin of the custom is wrapped in obscurity, and the common people generally appear to have no notion how or when it first arose, and the better educated classes are, it would seem, almost equally ignorant on the subject, and look upon it rather as a matter beneath their investigation. We believe, however, that it is by no means of so ancient a date as might have been supposed, judging from the great antiquity of most of the social customs of the Chinese. One tradition only refers it so far back as B.C. 1100, when it was said to have been introduced by one Tan Chi, the dissipated wife of a wicked emperor named Chou. She is said to have been born with club feet, and to have persuaded the emperor to order that all female children should have their feet distorted, so that thus her infirmity would be thought nothing of. Not much reliance is to be placed on this fable, for if there were any truth in it, some allusion would have been made to the practice in the Chinese Classics, and we believe we are correct in stating that none is to be found there at all.

Doctor Macgowan—an American gentleman of great experience in Chinese matters—gives a somewhat different account of the origin of the practice, placing it three centuries later. The custom, he says, is of comparatively modern origin, and owes its existence to the whim of Li Yuh, the licentious and unpopular prince of Keangnan, whose court was in Nanking. He ruled from A.D. 961 to 976, and was subdued and finally poisoned by the founder of the Sung dynasty. It appears that he was amusing himself in his palace, when the thought occurred to him that he might improve the appearance of the foot of one of his favourites. He accordingly bent her foot, so as to raise the instep into an arch, to resemble the new moon. The figure was much admired by the courtiers, who began at once to introduce it into their families. Soon after the province of



Keang-nan again became an integral part of the empire, from which point the new practice spread throughout all provinces and all ranks, until it became a national custom. Many lives were sacrificed by suicide; those females whose feet had not been bound, were persecuted by their mothers-in-law, and despised by their husbands; so much so, that they hung themselves or took poison. About one hundred and fifty years after the origin of the practice, we find a poet celebrating the beauties of the "golden lilies;" and from his description it would appear that seven centuries ago they were of the same size as those of the present day. According to the upholders of the development theory, such continued compression for centuries should have occasioned a national alteration in the structure of the Chinese foot, but nothing of the kind is observed.

The laws of China say nothing on the subject of the curious custom of which we have treated in the present paper, and though it is one which is deeply rooted and extremely popular throughout the length and breadth of the empire, there is no doubt that the present (Tartar) dynasty could abolish it with as much ease as, on their accession to power two centuries ago, they compelled the Chinese to shave their heads and wear queues; and it is greatly to be hoped that, in course of time, the humanising influence of European civilisation may lead them to take that step, and thus save millions of innocent children from needless torture and life-long deformity.

## YOUNG MR. NIGHTINGALE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "HOBSON'S CHOICE," &c.

### CHAPTER XXXVII. SERJEANT-PAINTER TO THE KING.

I WAS led up a broad and imposing flight of stairs. I noticed with regret that even on the soft carpet my boots creaked noisily—vulgarily, I thought. I envied the grave footman his silent, cat-like tread. I felt nervous and ill at ease—I scarcely knew why. But it occurred to me, I remember, that this servant of Sir George's was in bearing and appearance a much more refined, and polished, and graceful person than I was—his master's kinsman and visitor.

The footman quietly opened a door and bowed as I entered a large room lighted by one very high window that seemed to trench upon the floor above. It was a studio, handsomely furnished with much picturesque litter about it in the way of

armour, tapestry, china, metal work, and other artistic paraphernalia.

"Turn that canvas to the wall, Propert, if you please," said in a polite tone a gentleman who was leaning against a high mantelpiece with his back towards me.

Propert, the servant, dexterously removed a large canvas from an easel standing in the centre of the room, and then, after a moment's pause, as though to make sure that his services were not further needed, noiselessly withdrew. I was left alone with the gentleman: Sir George Nightingale, as I could not doubt.

He was tall and slight, but of most shapely figure. I was struck by a certain grace of line that attended his every movement and posture. And his elegance of form was displayed to advantage in the court-dress he wore of silver-edged black velvet, with cut-steel buttons and sword hilt, and embroidered white satin waistcoat. There had been that morning, as I afterwards learnt, a levee or drawing-room, and Sir George had been in attendance upon the court. He was quite bald, but for a narrow fringe of iron-grey hair at the back of his head.

He held in his long white Vandyke looking hands the letter I had brought from the Down Farm. There were rings upon his taper fingers I noted, and rich ruffles of yellow lace round his wrists. He read the letter more than once as it appeared to me, or he was musing over it, and only seeming to read it. Presently, he turned to me.

"So you are young Mr. Nightingale." He spoke firmly and deliberately, but there was a most pleasant musical ring about his voice. "We have met before, I think, Mr. Nightingale?"

Then I recognised him. He was the defendant in Messrs. Dicker Brothers' action; he was the gentleman I had served with a writ, on the steps of the club-house in Pall Mall. I felt so confused and dismayed that I remained speechless.

"I see," he said, "you have not forgotten me." He folded up the letter and placed it upon the mantelpiece. He then took from his pocket, and lightly tapped, a gold snuff-box, with a jewel-set, oval miniature decorating its lid.

"I am very sorry, Sir George—" I began in an awkward way an attempt at an apology.

"There is nothing to regret, Mr. Nightingale," he interposed. "You had a simple duty to perform. I can find no fault with your manner of performing it. It was not a pleasant duty."

"It was not, indeed," I murmured.

"It was pleasant to neither of us—it was the less pleasant to me. But I was alone to blame. I think I explained so much at the time. The matter had escaped me. It should not have escaped me. I can only plead my numerous engagements, the many calls upon my attention, the duties of my position. However, the thing is over now. So I am assured. I am to be troubled with no more writs on that account. That is your view of the case also, I may presume, Mr. Nightingale?"

"Yes, Sir George. The claim upon you has been discharged. There is an end of the matter altogether."

"That's well. We'll dismiss the thing from our minds then. And, if you please, we will date our acquaintance from our present meeting. I will only trust that you may not again have to serve me with a writ."

"I hope not, indeed, Sir George."

"That's well," he repeated. "And perhaps the fewer writs you serve upon others it will be the better for the world in general, the lawyers of course excepted. But we need not care for them. They care sufficiently for themselves. I beg your pardon, I forgot at the moment that you are to be counted among them—a recruit of the unholy army of attorneys."

He spoke pleasantly, and there was a kindly look in his bright dark eyes, which seemed to me to be almost of a bronze colour, with a certain metallic brilliancy in their sparkle as they caught and reflected the light; they were much shadowed, however, by his rather heavy brows and long thick black lashes. His complexion was pallid, and his features sharply shaped and very handsome in their extreme regularity. There was the look of carved ivory about his colourless symmetrical face. I could not but admire him exceedingly. While yet I felt that for all his friendly air and agreeable talk there was something repellent in his smile. It was, I thought, cold and cynical; though not so in any pronounced degree. Still, I could not but suspect him of mocking me a little, and assuming towards me a cordiality of manner that was not wholly genuine. I was not certain of this, however. But I knew that we stood apart from each other somehow, and that he closely watched me the while he spoke, as though noting the effect upon me of his aspect and address. I could, indeed, scarcely sustain his observation of me, it was so persistent and searching, and yet I could hardly say that it was deficient

in courtesy. It was certainly very different to ordinary point-blank staring.

He took a pinch of snuff with an adroit air, but without any apparent enjoyment of it, as I judged, but rather as though he were complying merely with the dictates of fashion. The snuff fell, for the most part, upon his waistcoat, and was lightly brushed off by a dainty movement of his beautiful jewelled hand, which was thus very fully exhibited. But the action was accomplished without effort or show of consciousness.

"Young Mr. Nightingale," he said, musingly; and then he asked me how old I was. I told him.

"Is it possible!" he said; and his strongly marked eyebrows arched with surprise. "You have not been long in London, I suppose?"

I answered that I had left the country now some months, and went on to apologise for having so long delayed presenting him my letter of introduction. He took it from the mantelpiece.

"I had not observed the date," he said, carelessly. I could not but doubt the truth of this statement. He had certainly seemed to read every line of the letter most carefully. And I could not divest myself of the notion that his manner was rather unreal, that he was in some measure playing a part; though with what object I could not conceive. "Yes, I see; it should have been delivered months ago. You thought it of no importance probably." And he crumpled up the letter, thrusting it into his pocket.

I said that in truth I had completely forgotten it, and explained my receiving it from my uncle at the moment of my departure from home, and its lying since hidden in my pocket-book.

"It is of no importance, no real importance, Mr. Nightingale. I refer, of course, to your delay in presenting it, not to the letter itself. I am happy to receive it. I am most pleased to see you. You have good news, I trust, from your relations at—the Down Farm, Purrington—that is the name of the place, I think? Yes. Your uncle, Mr. Orme, is well, I hope?"

"He is quite well."

"And your mother?"

"Quite well also, thank you, Sir George."

"I am glad to hear it. When you are writing to them you can—but that will not be necessary. You will write, of course, what you think proper. As I said, I am pleased to see you. I shall be happy to be of any service to you, should the op-

portunity of serving you ever present itself. It may or may not. You bear the name of Nightingale. If only on that account, I am bound to show you such attention, such kindness even, as I may. But as yet I scarcely know what my power may be in that respect. Tell me: they spoke to you concerning me at your home, the Down Farm?"

"No, Sir George."

"You rarely heard my name mentioned?"

"Indeed, Sir George, I never once heard your name mentioned."

"It is not to be wondered at," he said, after a pause. "It is often so; especially in England. The members of a family are parted by chance, by circumstances, quite as much as by choice. Town and the country are like distinct nations, engaged in different pursuits, forming different opinions, habits, and tastes, speaking a different language almost."

It seemed to me that he was referring to a certain Purrington accent that I knew to be still traceable in my speech. He read my thoughts, and smiled.

"Yes, you possess, I notice, something of a provincial accent, though I was far from alluding to that at the moment. But you may as well correct it if you can. Not that I object to it myself. It reminds me of fresh air, and green fields, and bright flowers. But London prejudice, I know, holds country dialect, or any suspicion of it, somewhat in contempt. And living in London one must recognise its foibles and follies of all kinds. But the thing is but a trifle. And so you are a lawyer?"

"I'm but a student at present—a very young one."

"And this profession of the law—it was of your own choosing?"

"Well, I began to learn farming first, Sir George—"

"And you wearied of it? I am not surprised. Though doubtless farming has charms for many. And then it was proposed to you that you should become a lawyer. And you jumped at the plan. It offered you liberty, London, a new life, and escape from the country—from home. Isn't that so?"

I confess that the case was much as he had stated it. He smiled graciously.

"Yes, there comes a time when home seems dull, especially a home miles away from town. Yet your home was a happy one, I suppose? You were kindly treated by your parents—I should say by your uncle and your mother?"

"Yes, indeed."

"I do not doubt it. But you were as Rasselas; your home as the Happy Valley; you longed to find a way out of it, for all its happiness. They were loth to part with you?"

"Yes, I think so; I am sure so. You do not think me ungrateful in quitting them as I did?"

"I think your conduct perfectly natural. Very likely in your place I should have done as you did. Ingratitude is very natural, I think—at any rate in some measure. At a certain period of life home loses its magic and value; it seems to mean restriction, confinement, apron-strings. It's not so much one's own home as one's father's and mother's. By-and-bye perhaps the old appreciation of it returns, or memory invests it with a kind of fanciful and romantic worth. Or one establishes a home of one's own. But you, at your age, can hardly have dreamt of doing that. Where are you living?"

I told him.

"Featherstone-buildings," he repeated, with an almost imperceptible shrug of his shoulders. "The Down Farm is your uncle's own property, I think, his freehold?" he asked presently.

"Yes, the greater part of it. Certain of his land, however, he holds under lease from Lord Overbury."

"Lord Overbury. So I understood. And Mr. Orme is a bachelor still? He is not likely to marry now?"

"Not at all likely, I should say."

"Probably not. You must find it a great change from the farm to Featherstone-buildings. But it may be convenient for you. Mr. Monck is the name of the gentleman you are articled to? So I understood." He trifled with his snuff-box again. "Are you considered to be like your mother?"

"Not very like, I think."

"She was dark with black hair, if I remember rightly?"

"Her hair is almost white now."

"Indeed! But time flies so."

"You have seen my mother, Sir George?"

"Yes, I have seen her; many years since, however."

"You knew my father, perhaps."

"Yes, I knew your father."

"I regret that I cannot remember him."

"You cannot, of course."

"I have seen his picture. A miniature in my mother's possession."

"I remember. There was a miniature

of him. It was thought like him at the time it was painted. You are fond of pictures? You care for art? You draw yourself perhaps?"

"Yes, a little."

"You have studied? Under what master?"

"I had a few lessons, a very few, some time ago now, from a Mr. Mauleverer."

"Mauleverer? I don't know the name—in connexion with art."

"Fane Mauleverer."

"I know nothing of him."

"And from a Monsieur Dubois, a Frenchman, settled for a time at Steepleborough."

"You must show me your drawings. I should like to see if you possess any real ability for art. Pardon my rudeness. But art is my *métier*. The world is kind enough to think that I really know something about it. I may be able to help you in that way, if in none other. Though in your case art will be merely a pastime. You have already determined on your profession. Still even a lawyer can hardly dispose of his leisure time more advantageously than in devoting it to art. I doubt not you will find painting a source of refined pleasure, an elegant accomplishment, even though you may not pursue it so persistently as I am bound to do. I confess that it is to me less delightful than it once was. I am too much its slave, the slave of the public, and I am very sensible of my bonds, though perhaps I should not speak of them. And now, Mr. Nightingale, I beg to thank you for your kindness in calling upon me. I am pleased that I have seen you. You will come again? You promise?"

I said that I would certainly come again, if I might, and bring my drawings.

"By all means, bring your drawings. I shall be delighted. Now, you will excuse me? I must divest myself of this masquerade suit." He smiled, and, with a wave of his white hand, drew attention to his court-dress. "I am compelled to observe forms and etiquettes of this kind. Good-bye, Mr. Nightingale."

He pressed my hand most cordially, moving towards me very gracefully, and keeping his dark eyes fixed upon me with his air of closely noting how far he had succeeded in impressing me.

"One moment," he said, as, making my best bow, I was quitting him. He touched the bell. "You may care to see such pic-

tures as are now here, though there are none of much importance, I think, and the light is but indifferent." Proport appeared.

"Proport, be kind enough to ask Mr. Mole if he can come here for a minute or two." Proport withdrew.

"You will understand, Mr. Nightingale, that at any time, at all times, my gallery, my studio is open to you. You may perhaps in such wise gather some instruction in art. At least, you may learn to detect my errors, and so to avoid them in your own case."

The door opened; a man entered.

"Ah! Mr. Mole," said Sir George, "I am sorry to trouble you. I will not detain you. I have but a word to say. This is young Mr. Nightingale, a relation of mine, from the country, who has done me the honour to call and introduce himself to me. This, Mr. Nightingale, is Mr. Mole, a most valuable assistant of mine; I really do not know how I should possibly get on without his help. You will kindly, Mr. Mole, take a note of my young relation's address, in case I should have occasion—and doubtless I shall have occasion—to communicate with him on some future day. And you will at all times allow him to have free access here, and show him the gallery, and the works we have in hand, and, in short, everything there is here to be seen, or that he may think worth looking at. You understand? Thank you. Again, Mr. Nightingale, excuse me, and good-bye."

Sir George bowed and smiled, and, his hand resting upon the hilt of his slender court sword, he moved, with a light and elastic step, from the room.

Mr. Mole was Fane Mauleverer.

He had not recognised me at first, or he had retained very full command of his facial expression. He now winked, the door having closed after Sir George.

"Master Duke," he whispered, hoarsely. "Of course! And his relation! To think of that! Hush!" He pressed his forefinger against his lips. After a moment he said, still in a whisper, "Not a word till he's out of hearing. All right. He's gone. How are you, my dear boy? God bless you. Who'd have thought of our meeting here!"

We shook hands most heartily. Indeed, in his excitement, he threw his arms round and embraced me. He had not abandoned his old theatrical ways.